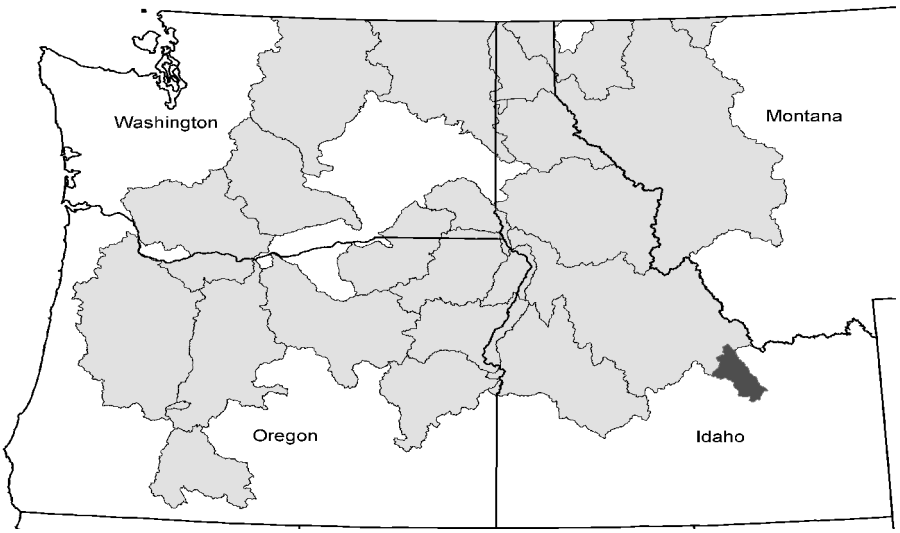
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Bull Trout Draft Recovery Plan

and proposed Critical Habitat

Little Lost River Recovery Unit

(CHAPTER 19)



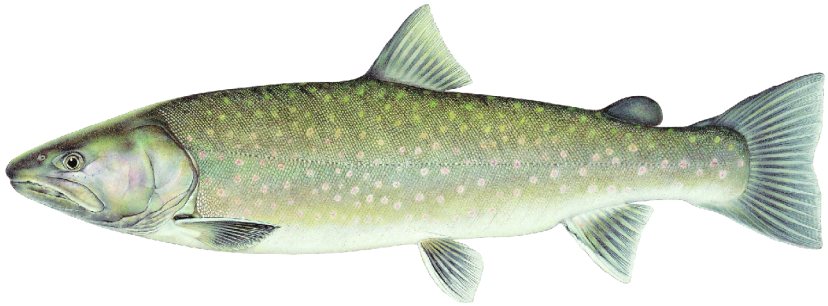
What areas are included in the Little Lost River Recovery Unit?
The Little Lost River Recovery Unit includes the Little Lost River in central Idaho and its tributaries where bull trout have been observed. The recovery unit includes one core area and 10 local populations.

How much of the area is proposed as critical habitat?
About 115.4 miles of streams are proposed for critical habitat in the Little Lost River basin. This is approximately 9 percent of the stream miles in the entire recovery unit.

Who developed the draft Bull Trout Recovery Plan and critical habitat proposal?
The draft recovery plan for bull trout range-wide was developed through the collaboration of Federal, State, Tribal and private biologists working with representatives of local watersheds, private landowners and industry and conservation organizations. A total of 24 recovery unit teams contributed to the development of the current draft recovery plan. These recovery unit teams included experts in biology, hydrology and forestry, as well as natural resource users and stakeholders with interest and knowledge of bull trout and the habitats they depend on for survival. The critical habitat proposal was based in large part on information developed by the recovery unit teams and supplemented with even more recent information on the current distribution and habitat characteristics of the species.

What is the relationship between the draft Bull Trout Recovery Plan and the critical habitat proposal?
The draft recovery plan and critical habitat proposal are closely linked. The information developed by the recovery unit teams, and the science underlying that information, are the basis for the critical habitat proposals. However, critical habitat is designed to provide for the conservation of a species by identifying

those areas essential for conservation and requiring special management, whereas a recovery plan is a much larger blueprint providing guidance for the eventual recovery and de-listing of a species.



Who would be affected by recovery efforts and a critical habitat designation?
A recovery plan is advisory only and carries no regulatory authority. It is the Fish and Wildlife Service's estimation of the actions necessary for the recovery of the species. Agencies, communities or individuals are encouraged to take voluntary actions described in the recovery plan to benefit bull trout.

The primary effect of a critical habitat designation is that Federal agencies are required to consult with the Fish and Wildlife Service on actions they carry out, fund, or authorize that might affect critical habitat. It is important to note that in most cases, this is already occurring under the section 7 interagency consultation requirements of the Endangered Species Act. Non-Federal entities, including private landowners, that may also be affected could include, for example, those seeking a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 404 permit under the Clean Water Act to build an in-water structure, those seeking Federal approval to discharge effluent into the aquatic environment, or those seeking Federal funding to implement private property improvements, where such actions affect the aquatic environment that has been designated as critical habitat. But again, in most cases where this link between activities on private lands and Federal funding, permitting, or authorization exists, consultation under section 7 of the Endangered Species Act is already occurring.

A critical habitat designation does not have any effect on non-Federal entities when there is not a Federal nexus. For example, swimming, boating, fishing, farming, ranching, or any of a range of activities normally conducted by a landowner or operator of a business not involving Federal funding, permitting, or authorization in order to occur would not be affected.

How was the draft recovery plan for each recovery unit developed?
Recovery units were delineated based on the biology of the species and considerations for paralleling existing state conservation and fisheries management frameworks wherever possible. Recovery teams incorporated existing state conservation processes to the degree possible, depending on the degree to which they had been developed (for example, the Montana Bull Trout Restoration Plan, the State of Idaho's Bull Trout Conservation Plan, the State of Washington's Statewide Strategy to Recover Salmon and the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds).

What is the status of bull trout in the Little Lost River Recovery Unit?
Bull trout are widely distributed throughout the Little Lost Recovery Unit, with

individuals occurring from the headwaters in the upper Little Lost River to below the flood-control structure near Howe, Idaho. Both resident and migratory bull trout occur in the recovery unit. There are approximately 6,250 adult bull trout in 10 local populations. These are not considered at risk from genetic drift.

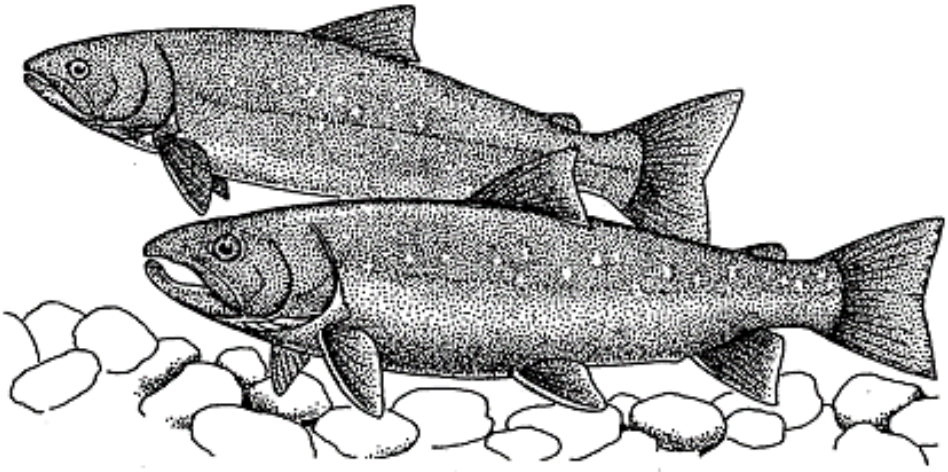
What are the threats to bull trout in the Little Lost River Recovery Unit?
Currently, high stream temperatures are likely the most limiting factor for bull trout. Land management activities, such as water diversion and improper livestock grazing, are likely causes for high stream temperature.

Other factors affecting bull trout in the Little Lost River Recovery Unit include: dams, non-native brook trout, and possibly harvest due to poaching or misidentification.

What are the recovery goals and objectives?
The goal of the bull trout recovery plan is to ensure the long-term persistence of self-sustaining, complex interacting groups of bull trout distributed across the species' range so that the species can be delisted. To recover bull trout in the Little Lost River Recovery Unit, the following objectives have been identified:

- Maintain current distribution of bull trout and restore distribution in previously occupied areas within the Little Lost River Recovery Unit.
- Maintain stable or increasing trends in abundance of bull trout within the recovery unit.
- Restore and maintain suitable habitat conditions for all bull trout life history stages and strategies.
- Conserve genetic diversity and provide opportunity for genetic exchange.

What are the criteria for measuring recovery?
Recovery will be measured according to four criteria: distribution, abundance, population trends and connectivity in the watershed. The Little Lost River Recovery Unit includes specific, quantifiable standards for each of these criteria.
Distribution criteria will be met when the current distribution of bull trout in the 10 local populations identified is maintained.
Abundance criteria will be met when at least 6,750 individuals occur in the recovery unit.
Trend criteria will be met when adult bull trout exhibit stable or increasing trends in abundance in the recovery unit for at least two generations.
Connectivity criteria will be met when specific barriers to bull trout migration in the Little Lost River Recovery Unit have been addressed.
What actions will be necessary to recover bull



trout in the Little Lost River Recovery Unit?
Among the actions that will be required are protecting, restoring and maintaining suitable habitat conditions for bull trout and identifying and correcting barriers to migration. For more details, please see the draft Bull Trout Recovery Plan, Little Lost River Recovery Unit, Ch. 19.

How long will recovery take?
A recovery plan is advisory only and carries no regulatory authority; therefore it is difficult to determine how long it will take to recover bull trout in the Little Lost River Recovery Unit. However, given our best estimate of what government agencies and others might do, it could take three to five bull trout generations (15 to 25 years) or longer before identified threats to the species can be significantly reduced and bull trout can be considered eligible for de-listing.

How much will recovery cost?
Estimating the cost of recovery is difficult and complex, due to many variables and unknowns. However, the Little Lost River Recovery Unit team has estimated that recovery could cost about $1 million spread over 25 years. This includes estimates of expenditures by local, Tribal, State and Federal governments and by private business and individuals. The estimates are attributed to bull trout conservation but other aquatic species also will benefit. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is soliciting comments from the public on the estimated costs.

How can I obtain copies of the documents?
The documents, along with maps, fact sheets, photographs and other materials may be found on the Pacific Region's website at http://species.fws.gov/bulltrout.

How can I comment?
The Service will be accepting comments, beginning November 29, 2002, on its draft recovery plan for bull trout in the Columbia and Klamath river basins and in the St. Mary-Belly River Basin in Montana. Comments on the draft recovery plan will be accepted for 90 days, until February 27, 2003. Comments on the draft recovery plan may be mailed to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Snake River Basin Office, 1387 S. Vinnell Way, Room 368, Boise, ID 83709; faxed to 208-378-5262, or sent via e-mail to: fw1srbocomment@fws.gov

Beginning November 29, 2002, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will accept comments from the public on the agency's proposal to designate critical habitat for the Columbia River and Klamath River distinct population segments of bull trout. Comments will be accepted for 60 days, until January 28, 2003.

Comments on the critical habitat proposal may be submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Regional Office, attn: John Young, Bull Trout Coordinator, 911 N.E. 11th Avenue, Portland Oregon 97232; faxed to 503.231.6243 or e-mailed to: R1bulltroutCH@r1.fws.gov

In addition, a series of public meetings and public hearings will be held in January. Times and locations will be posted on our Bull Trout website at http://species.fws.gov/bulltrout and publicized in local newspapers.

This is only a brief summary. Please see full draft recovery plan and critical habitat proposal for complete details.